

# Life After Death

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Category: How to Train Your Dragon

Genre: Fantasy, Supernatural

Language: English

Status: Completed

Published: 2014-08-02 23:37:50

Updated: 2014-08-27 03:13:29

Packaged: 2016-04-26 20:20:38

Rating: T

Chapters: 11

Words: 13,007

Publisher: [www.fanfiction.net](http://www.fanfiction.net)

Summary: When the teens are attacked by a mysterious demon, Hicca is killed. When she goes to Valhalla, she is told by Odin himself that she was not supposed to die. The god sends her back to the mortal world with the task of finding her killer and putting an end to him-but there's a catch: she's still a spirit. How will she kill a man when no one can even see her? (First fanfic)

## 1. Chapter 1

\*\*This story takes place about four years after the first movie, but before the second one. I've gender swapped the characters so that Hiccup becomes a girlâ€"Hiccaâ€"and Astrid becomes a guyâ€"Astro (it's the most similar name I could come up with).\*\*

\*\*Why did I do that, you ask? Well, because I'm a girl, and since the majority of this fanfiction will be from Hicca's point of view, I'll be able to relate to her better.\*\*

\*\*So, please enjoy, and please review and tell me what you think!  
\*\*

I leaned low over Toothless's back, the wind streaming past me and through the small slits in my helmet. I'd left the others behind long ago, as I often did on our weekend joyrides. They were always a little pissed by the time they finally caught up to me, but they never stayed mad for long.

I whooped and hollered with joy as Toothless dove straight down towards the ocean, faster than an arrow fired from a crossbow. He pulled up at the last possible moment, throwing up ocean spray and dousing us with water. With a quick adjustment of his prosthetic tailfin I sent us shooting back up into the clouds once again.

We continued to cut the fool and do dangerous stunts that my dad would probably have a heart attack if he knew what they were, until I finally realized that we should probably go find the other teens

again. "Come on, bud." I patted Toothless's side before turning him around and heading back the way we came.

"Hicca!" Snotlout yelled indignantly as Toothless and I pulled up in front of the group, twenty minutes later. "You've got to stop leaving us behind like that! It's not fair!"

I laughed and flipped the visor of my helmet up. "Oh, deal with it. I'm just having some fun!"

"We're having fun too!" Tuffnut said. "See?" He and Ruffnut both flipped Barf and Belch's heads over and intertwined their long necks.

"Coooool!" Ruffnut called as she hung upside down, waving her hands in open space.

"I'm gonna laugh when you fall off," Astro called jokingly. He, of course, didn't mind me leaving the group behind as much as the others sometimes did.

But Fishlegs didn't seem to pick up on the joking tone in Astro's voice. "That's not funny! She could get really hurt if she fell!" He steered Meatlug so that she was hovering under Ruffnut. "I'll catch you if you fall, babe!"

"Ew!" the blonde girl quickly righted her dragon's head.

"Okay, okay," I said, chastising their behavior. "Come on, guys, let's find a place to land for lunch."

We flew around at a much more relaxed pace before landing on a small island. It was only a few acres across, but it was grassy and open.

Each of us had packed a small lunch before we left Berk that morning, and now we all sat in a circle while we ate. The dragons didn't need to eat until we got back, so they all stretched out in the sun and napped while we ate.

Astro sat down next to me while we unpacked our lunches. We always ended up sharing, so we halved everything we had and exchanged food with each other.

"Oh, Hicca," Astro said, "I got you something." He stood and walked back over to Stormfly, reaching into the saddle bag.

I looked up at him in surprise. "You did?"

He rummaged around in the leather pouch until he found what he was looking for. He moved back over to where I was sitting and lowered himself back down to the ground, holding something out to me.

The object was perfectly shaped into a sphere, and almost twice as big as my fist. The surface was orange-colored and slightly bumpy, but it gleamed in the sun.

I let out a small gasp. "An orange! Where did you get this?" Fruit was extremely rare on Berk. Any "fruit" that did grow was tough and very sour, and nobody liked the look or taste of them.

Astro smiled. "I bought it from Trader Johan this morning. Said he got it from a country pretty far south of here, where the climate is warmer and wetter. He doesn't usually ship food or anything like that, because it's hard to keep it fresh."

I continued to stare down at the fruit in my hands. This was the next best thing to buried treasure.

"Thank you," I said, looking up at him. "Thank you so much, Astro!" I planted a kiss on his lips.

Snotlout groaned. "Do you guys have to do that in front of us?" he said grumpily.

Astro sighed in exasperation. "Grow up, Snot!"

Snotlout just made a face and tried not to stare at the orange as he went back to his lunch.

Grinning, I stuck my tongue out at him before drawing my dagger. "Come on, I'll split it with you, Astro." I cut the orange in half and handed one to Astro. We peeled the skin off and enjoyed the sweet, tangy flavor, trying to keep the juice from running down our chins. Of course, Astro only ate a small part of his half and insisted that I take the rest.

After we ate, we sat around for a good while and talked while we waited for our food to settle. It's never a good idea to hop on a dragon after you just ate. When the sun passed overhead sometime after midday, we began packing up and preparing to head back to Berk.

I was looking over Toothless's prosthetic to make sure everything was in place when I heard Fishlegs yelp. "Wh-where did you come from?" he squeaked.

I turned to see what was going on. Fishlegs was staring, wide-eyed, at a man standing at the edge of the tiny island. He was clad entirely in pitch black armor. His helmet covered his entire face, and looked a bit like mine with slits for the eyes and mouth. But I couldn't see anything through the slits—"no flesh, no whites of the eyes"—there seemed to be nothing more than a black void beneath that helmet.

If that wasn't creepy enough, he stood stock still. No movement at all. I couldn't see him breathing, or see any of the very subtle, involuntary twitches most people have when trying to stand completely still. If you just happened to glance at him, you would've thought he was a statue.

I walked forward so that I stood next to Fishlegs. "Who are you?" I asked. "And how did you get here?" I didn't see any ships, and there was nowhere he could have been hiding.

The dark figure said nothing.

"Are you going to answer me?"

Slowly, he raised his hand and reached over his shoulder. Seemingly

from out of nowhere, he drew a long sword.

"I can see you like to match your accessories to your outfit," I muttered. The sword was also completely black--hilt, blade, everything. But there was something else about it, too . . . it was almost like a bass hum, so deep that you weren't actually hearing it. You were feeling it in your bones, as it traveled through the air and the ground.

And it felt wrong.

It's hard to describe exactly what that sword made me feel. I wanted to bend over and vomit, turn around and run, crawl into a deep, dark hole, and begin scratching off every inch of skin on my body all at the same time.

I shuddered.

"What are you?" I asked quietly, trying to quell that sickening feeling in my stomach. The dragons raised their hackles and began to growl deep in their throats. Astro moved in front of me protectively.

Still, the dark figure remained silent.

And then he began to stalk forward.

I say "stalk," because that's exactly what he did. He didn't just walk, or tread toward us quietly. He stalked, like an animal stalks its prey. Slowly, silently . . . deadly. And every time he put his foot down, I noticed that any grass around his foot withered and died within a matter of seconds.

This man--no, this thing--was far from human.

"We need to get out of here right now," I whispered in Astro's ear. He nodded, and we all began to move towards our dragons.

But before we were able to mount, the Thing flicked his hand. Suddenly, all our dragons were picked up by an invisible force and thrown far off the shore of the island and into the sea.

"Toothless!" I screamed. The dragons wouldn't be able to just take flight from the water. They had to have a solid surface to push off of and launch themselves into the air. If the water was too deep, they'd have to start swimming until they reached shallow water, and, except for water dragons, the rest are not good swimmers--and then you add the weight of saddles and equipment? Our dragons could end up drowning. We had to do something.

I drew my sword and pulled the trigger to activate the flaming blade. Holding it out in front of me, I began to give orders. "Fishlegs, Ruff, Tuff--you guys get out there and help our dragons. Leave Toothless's saddle and his prosthetic on, he's going to need them. But get rid of the saddle bags and everything in them. Then get everything off of the others and try to help them keep their heads above the water until it's shallow enough to take flight.

Snotlout, Astro--you're with me. We need to get rid of this

asshole." Normally, I would have wanted to know the Thing's reason for attacking. But once you mess with my dragon?

Oh, Hel, no. You're dead.

Snotlout and Astro drew their battle axes and we instinctively began to try and surround the Thing. But the Thing simply flicked his hand again, and both Snotlout and Astro flew off in opposite directions.

Oh, fuck.

I had no idea if they were okay because they were out of my line of sightâ€"and now I was facing the Thing alone.

\_Now why is that?\_ A small voice in the back of my mind asked. \_There has to be a reason it has isolated you.\_

\_Now is not the time, \_I growled back.

\_Isn't it obvious that it could have very easily just killed the others if it wanted to?\_

\_Shut up!\_

\_It's looking for you, specifically.\_

"Shut up!" I said out loud.

That's when the Thing attacked. I don't know if I pissed it off when I said "shut up" or if the two occurrences just happened to coincide.

But, whatever the case wasâ€"fighting this Thing was a \_bitch.\_

It brought it's sword down as if to split my skull in two, and I blocked with my own flaming weapon. \_Holy mother of Thor, this Thing's strong!\_ I'd filled out in the last four years and was sporting some pretty lean, strong muscle. But, under the pressure of this evil, black blade, my arms trembled and I wanted to vomit all over again.

I disengaged and backed up, trying to get my bearings. The Thing charged me again, and I sidestepped and slashed with my sword.

I felt the flaming blade bite into something as the Thing charged past me, and I expected at least a yelp of surprise, if not pain. But as I turned to face the Thing again, I could see no sign of injury, or even a smudge on its armor. It cocked its head to one side, regarding me. For the first time, sound emitted from the figure.

Laughter.

The Thing was chuckling, so low that I almost couldn't hear it. But the message was clear: it was playing with me. That little voice in the back of my head had told me: it could kill us with the swipe of a hand, but it was choosing not to. All for a little bit of fun.

Now that is what was beginning to piss me off to no freaking

end.

Twirling my sword, I stepped forward and began to attack. It was probably really stupid of me, I'll give you that. But I had no doubt that the Thing would kill us in the end anyway, and I wasn't going to go down without a fight.

I swiped and stabbed and parried, blocked and jabbed and slashed. But no matter what I did, I didn't hit the Thing onceâ€"and I was beginning to tire. The horrible aura about the Thing and its blade was sucking away my energy and stamina like a leech.

A terrible pressure began to settle over my pounding heart and lungs, and I struggled to breathe. My vision narrowed from lack of air. "What are you doing to me?" I choked.

The Thing knocked my sword aside effortlessly, and then sank that evil, black blade into my chest.

My breath caught. I stared down at the metal sticking out of my chest. Struggling, I lifted my head and stared into the void behind the eye slits.

The Thing yanked his blade out and vanished.

I swayed. The world began to tip over, and suddenly I was on my side, my cheek pressed against the cool grass. Dimly, I heard someone screaming my name over and over. And something roared, loudâ€"loud enough to shake the very earth I lay on. My vision was filling with black spots. I couldn't see anything.

Hands grabbed me and flipped me onto my back. The hands then pressed over a hole in my chest.

Why was there a hole in my chest? I was pretty sure that wasn't normal.

"Hicca! Hicca, stay with me! Don't you dare die!"

The voices were annoying. I wished they would stop.

"Hicca! Hicca, please . . . I love you . . ."

My whole body began to feel deliciously warm. The voices began to fade.

It so dark . . . and warm . . . and quiet . . . .

\*\*Don't worry, there's more to come! Please tell me what you thought of it! :)\*\*

## 2. Chapter 2

Astro stared down at Hicca's body in his arms. Her eyes were half closed. Blood covered her chest. It was also on his hands.

No. No. No. She couldn't be dead.

Snotlout fell to his knees beside her. He just looked

stunned.

Fishlegs and the twins had gotten the dragons back to the island, and now they stared in disbelief at Hicca's unmoving form. Tears poured down Fishleg's face.

The dragons also looked shocked. They all loved Hicca, and now, suddenly, she was just gone.\_

\* \* \*

><p>Toothless crawled forward and gently nudged Hicca's hand, crooning. Then he began to gently lick her cheek. She usually squealed and pushed him away whenever he licked her excessively, and he couldn't understand why she didn't do that now. Hicca had to get up. She had to climb on his back, and they could go flying together. Why wouldn't she get up?<p>

The dragon looked at the gaping wound in her chest. Maybe he could heal her. Maybe it wasn't too late. He began licking the hole in Hicca's chest.

But the wound wasn't closing. Why wasn't it closing? He began to lick at it more insistently.

\* \* \*

><p>Astro knew what Toothless was doing when he began licking Hicca's wound. He'd seen him heal her before, whenever Hicca cut herself, or when her prosthetic leg slipped and she skinned the palms of her hands.<p>

But Astro knew it wouldn't work now.

"Toothless," Astro said quietly. But Toothless ignored him and continued to work.

"Toothless," he said, a bit more insistently. Astro placed his hand on the side of Toothless's head and forced the dragon to look at him. "She's gone. I'm so sorry, but she's gone." Tears filled Astro's eyes as he said it. "She's gone."

The dragon looked at him for a long moment with big eyes. Then he raised his head to the sky and let out a long, loud, mournful cry.

It was the saddest and most miserable sound they'd ever heard.

Everyone on the island began to weep, even Snotlout. The dragons lifted their heads and joined Toothless in the mourning cry.

Astro's body shook with sobs as he closed Hicca's eyes. His tears fell across her face and he tried to wipe them away with his sleeve, but they just kept coming.

"Snotlout," Astro choked between sobs, "You need . . . to go get . . . the chief." He needed to see his daughter before everyone else on Berk did.

Nodding, Snotlout tried to wipe away his tears before mounting Hookfang and taking off.

Fishlegs sat down next to Astro, sniffing. "What was that thing?" he asked, very quietly. "What was that thing that did this to her?"

Astro just shook his head. He didn't trust himself to speak anymore.

\* \* \*

><p>"Chief!"</p>

Stoick turned from his conversation with Gobber and looked over to the docks, where Hookfang and Snotlout had landed.

"Ah, hello, Snotlout." He called, before looking around. "Where are the others?"

"Chiefâ€œ" Snotlout's voice cracked.

It was then that Stoick realized he had been crying. A sense of dread began to come over him. "What is it, son?"

"Sir, you need to come with me, right now."

Stoick's stomach dropped. Without asking any questions, he called Skullcrusher to him and followed Snotlout.

The boy led him to a small, grassy island, where he saw Fishlegs and the twins weeping, and the dragons crooning mournfully.

Astro had his back to him and Snotlout when they landed. He was hunched over something, his shoulders shaking. Toothless was also there, his head next to whatever it was in Astro's arms.

Stoick saw a pair of legs stretched out from Astro's lapâ€œand one of them was a familiar, metal prosthetic.

Stoick's whole world came crashing down around him. He slid off of Skullcrusher's back as if in a dream. \_This can't be.\_ He walked around in front of Astro and collapsed to his knees when he saw her.

Her eyes were closed. She looked so peaceful, as if she was sleeping. But there was blood . . . so much blood. The source was a hole in her chest. The red substance covered her leather armor, splashed on her chin, and also covered Astro's hands.

Astro let him snatch Hicca's body from his arms. He pushed her hair away from her face, searching for any signs of life. Then he yanked off his helmet and put his ear to her chest, as he had done four years ago after she killed the Red Death. He had heard the slow, but steady thumping of her heart then. Maybe he would hear it now. He didn't care that his cheek was getting covered in her blood as he held his ear over her heart.

He heard nothing.

Stoick clutched his one and only daughter to his chest, rocking back and forth as he lamented, tears pouring freely down his face.

### 3. Chapter 3

Where am I?

I turned in a slow circle, looking around in bewilderment.

I was in what looked like the great hall on Berk, but this one was simply massive. I was willing to bet that the entire villageâ€"and then someâ€"could fit in here three times.

The ceiling reached far, far above my head. The roof had what appeared to be spear shafts for rafters, and was thatched with shields. Coats of mail were strewn over the benches. A wolf hung in front of the west doors, and an eagle hovered above it. At the front of the hall was a throneâ€"and in that throne was Odin himself.

He was also massive, just like the hall. He was maybe fifty feet tall, with a long white beard and kind eyes. He wore golden armor and held a long spear upright in one hand. A raven perched on his shoulder, head twitching as it watched the occupants of the hallâ€"and the occupants were the oddest and slightly scariest thing about the place.

They were all dead.

Spirits milled aimlessly about the hall. They were like walking shadowsâ€"I couldn't make out any details about them. They were just dark, human-shaped clouds that had no features and were slightly see-through. None of them actually seemed to speak to one another, but I did hear the quiet murmur of voices.

And then it hit me: I was in Valhalla.

I was dead.

I would never ride Toothless again. I would never see my dad again. I would never be able to hang out with my friends again . . . and I would never be able to tell Astro that I loved him.

I remembered the voice that kept yelling at me as the darkness began taking over: "Hicca! Hicca, please . . . I love you . . ."

Astro loved me. But I would never get to say it back to him. My heart began breaking as I thought about what must be happening to my dad and my friends back on Berk.

Tears filled my eyes (apparently dead people can still cry) and I looked toward the front of the hall, where Odin sat. Maybe I could ask him to send a message, or a sign, to the village, so that they would know everything would be okay.

Slowly, I began making my way towards the god, trying to blink away my tearsâ€"and trying not to have a panic attack. The spirits in the hall recoiled from me, as if I was something disgusting they didn't want to touch. They quickly cleared a path to the front of the throne.

Puzzled by their behavior, I walked towards Odin. I stopped several feet away from him and knelt, bowing my head.

"Rise." He had a deep, rich bass voice that reverberated around the room.

Nervously, I stood and looked up at him. He looked right back at me and then he frowned. "What are you doing here?" he asked.

I blinked. "Uhâ€"sirâ€"Iâ€" I sputtered for a moment. "Wh-what do you mean?"

"It is not your time yet," he said. "You should not be here."

"Butâ€"but I died. I got stabbed."

"Stabbed by whom?"

"Uh . . . well, it was more of a 'what' than a 'who,'" I said hesitantly. "It was more like a demon than anything."

Odin started, and then leaned forward. "What did you say?"

"Heâ€"it was more like a demon than anything, sir." I swallowed nervously. What the Hel was going on?

Odin stepped down from his throne, and I gasped and leapt backwards as a bright light swirled around him for a moment. Then he stood in front of me, about seven feet tall, with his raven still perched on his shoulder and the spear still in his hand.

"A demon?" he demanded.

"W-well, I really don't know, sir," I was beginning to panic. "Itâ€"it just didn't seem at all humanâ€"it wore all black armor and had a black sword and everywhere it stepped the grass around his foot died and he had this aura about him that just felt evil and he sent our dragons and my friends flying off into the ocean with the flick of his hand andâ€" "

Odin placed his hand on my shoulder. "Slow down," he said gently. "It's alright. Just tell me exactly what happened."

I swallowed and took a shaky breath, and then told him all about the Thing and what it did.

When I was finished, he seemed very angry, but not at me. "Loki," he growled.

"That was Loki?" I said in disbelief.

The god looked up at me. "No, that wasn't Loki," he said. "It was one of his demons."

I felt sick. "One of Loki's demons killed me?"

"It appears so." He rubbed his eyes with his hand. "Loki has been imprisoned for the past three hundred years, and so have his demons.

But, a few days ago, one of his demons managed to escape his prison. We have been trying to find him, but it is very difficult to capture a demon."

"Why would a demon come and kill me, specifically?" I asked.

Odin sighed. "Loki is very bitter, to put it lightly, towards the gods, because we imprisoned him. So, he wants to hurt us the worst way possible: he wants to kill the people we care about, the ones we watch over. He wants to destroy the Vikings."

"Oh, gods." After I said it, I suddenly looked at Odin. "Uh, sorry."

"It's alright," he chuckled before continuing. "Now that one of his demons has escaped, it is eager to do his bidding. So he went after you first, because you are the one that all the Vikings know and love. You are a symbol of their courage and will. And now that he's killed you, he's ready to go after the rest of your people."

My stomach dropped. "It's going after the village?"

Odin nodded somberly. "It will start with your friends, and from there, the rest of the people of Berk. After that, he will stop at nothing to free his comrades, and his master—Loki himself. Then they will all come and try to destroy Asgard."

"Well, there has to be something you can do!" I began to panic again. "Can't you hunt it down and kill it, or at least imprison it again? You're a god!"

"There is only so much a god can do, Hicca. We can make sure Loki stays in his prison, and secure the rest of his demons' prisons. But we cannot do much else—that is why we will need your help."

I stared at him. "My help? What could I possibly do to stop a demon?"

"There are certain laws we immortals must follow. One of which is that we cannot enter the mortal world with the intention of harming another being, no matter how evil. We also cannot kill another immortal. And right now, that immortal demon is in the mortal world, where we cannot reach him in order to capture him."

"But if the demon is immortal," I asked, "how come he can enter the mortal world with bad intentions and you can't?"

"He should be bound by the same laws as the gods are, but he has broken them. And since we cannot kill him, and we cannot capture him from where he is . . . that's where you come in."

I looked at him suspiciously. "What does that mean?"

Odin looked me in the eyes. "I will be able to send you back to the mortal world—"

I gasped. I could go back!

"But you will still be a spirit."

I started. "What? I'll be a ghost?"

"Yes."

"Then how will I kill the demon if I'm a ghost? I can't even warn my people if I'm still a spirit."

"You have to understandâ€"you died because they cheated," he explained. "Loki and his demons should not have been able to harm you. When they did, they upset the balance of the realms. You came here at the wrong timeâ€"and that's why the spirits here are repelled by you." Odin paused. "And that's also why, if you can kill this demon, I will be able to restore life to you, and correct the balance between the realms of the living and the dead."

I was shocked. "So . . . if I kill the demon . . . I'll be able to go home?"

The god nodded. "Correct."

I looked him dead in the eyes. "Alright then. How do I kill this demon?"

He smiled. "Hand me your sword."

I drew my sword and activated the collapsed blade, flames licking the metal as I handed it to him, hilt first. Odin took the sword and waved his hand over the blade. With a whoosh, the flames turned from red and orange to blue and white.

He handed the weapon back to me. "Now you can use this to kill anything that is not of the mortal world. It will also protect you from the demon's black aura."

I watched the blue and white flames flicker for a moment, before putting it up and facing Odin once again with a smile. "Thank you. I'm ready to go."

He smiled back at me. "I will send you back, but make sure you get some rest first."

I frowned. "Dead people need rest?"

"You will if you are going to battle a demon." He reached up and touched my forehead. "Rest."

My legs buckled, and everything went black as I collapsed into a deep, peaceful sleep.

\*\*I did some research on what Odin and Valhalla looked like, so I hope I gave some pretty good descriptions. But I did make up the thing about Loki and his demons, so I hope this doesn't come off as cheesy.\*\*

\*\*Please review, I love hearing what you guys have to say about my story! \*\*

When I opened my eyes, I was staring up at the sky. It was dark, but a full moon hung above me and stars twinkled all around it.

Slowly, I sat up and looked around. I was back on Berk, behind my house. Standing, I noticed lots of firelight coming from the docks. I made my way toward it and saw a large crowd of people standing at the edge of the waterâ€"and when I say "large crowd," I mean the entire village of Berk stood there, holding torches above their heads to light up the night.

At first I tried to be quiet as I came up behind them, but then I realized that there was no point in that. I was a ghost, a spirit. No one would be able to see or hear me. So, moving quickly, I made my way down the hill so that I stood away from the crowd, but facing the ocean as they were.

My dad stood in front of them, Astro and the teens stood slightly behind him, and they all held longbows with a flaming arrow notched on the string. Toothless also stood with them, his head bowed as he crooned quietly.

Stoick raised his face to the sky, and I could see tears running into his beard. "I'm not going to give a long, heartfelt speech," he said, loud enough for everyone to hear. "My daughterâ€" his voice cracked, and he swallowed hard before continuing. "There are no words to describe what an amazing person she was. You all knew her. You all knew how kind, and stubborn, and clever, and strong, and brave she was. We all loved her. Keep her close to your heart. Tell your children about her, and your grandchildren, your great-grandchildren. That's all I ask of you." Fresh tears began to leak from his eyes. "Keep her memory alive. Never forget her."

With that, he raised his bow and fired off the arrow. It streaked through the night like a comet before landing on a raft that had been floated out to seaâ€"where I knew my body lay. The raft burst into flame.

Astro and the other teens followed suit, firing their arrows onto the raft. Toothless looked up and fired a white-hot plasma blast that exploded and sent a blue ripple across the sky. After he did, every single dragon on the island fired into the sky, and for a moment the night was lit up just as if it was day.

The dragons roared. The people wept. And my heart broke as I watched them.

An hour later, the Vikings had built a bonfire in the middle of the village and were now seated or standing around it. A couple of people played wind pipes and beat their drums, and there was a small crowd dancing to the music. Some people feasted on food prepared in the great hall, and tried to enjoy themselves. That was how Viking funerals usually wentâ€"you mourned the death at the beginning, but after that, you feasted and danced to celebrate their life.

But I could tell that they were having a hard time celebrating. Those dancing didn't seem to really have their hearts in it, and the few that ate didn't tear into the food with normal, Viking relish. And though it was probably wrong, my heart warmed slightly to see how much they missed me.

At the edge of the crowd, I saw my dad sitting alone—"that is, until Gobber came and sat next to him and began forcing Stoick to talk to him. I smiled, knowing that my dad would probably be okay with Gobber around giving him forced therapy sessions. Snotlout, Fishlegs, and the twins were a part of the crowd that was dancing. I knew they would most likely be fine, too, in time.

But then I saw Toothless and Astro. The two of them were sitting in the shadows, Astro rubbing Toothless's head and Toothless staring sadly into the flames of the bonfire.

I walked over to them and stood in front of the two (they stared right through me, of course). Astro was slumped forward, and his eyes were red and puffy from crying. "I should have been there," he muttered. "I should have gotten there sooner, and maybe she wouldn't be dead." Toothless moaned, as if he was expressing that exact same sentiment.

They feel guilty, I suddenly realized. They think it's their fault that I died.

"It's not your fault," I said out loud. Neither of them moved. "Do you hear me?" I said, more forcefully. Bending forward, I leaned down so that my lips were near their ears. "It was not your fault."

Suddenly, both of them jumped and looked at each other. I gasped. They heard me!

"Did you hear that?" Astro asked Toothless. The dragon's eyes widened in response. "Do you think that was her?" Toothless looked at Astro for a moment, and then licked his cheek.

Astro laughed and pushed him away. "Hicca," he said, "If that's really you . . . thank you. I love you." Toothless just let his tongue dangle from his mouth as he grinned.

My heart swelled, and I could tell that a huge weight had been lifted off of their shoulders. I smiled, knowing now that these two would also be okay.

\*\*Thanks for reading! More to come soon, and some action will be in the next chapter, I promise! And as always, please let me know what you think!\*\*

## 5. Chapter 5

Odin hadn't told me how to find the demon—"whom I'd deemed "Bob," as I could think of nothing else to call him—"on my own. And I doubted there was any way for me to find him. So, I decided to wait for him to show up on his own. Odin had told me that I was only the start of what Bob planned to be a massacre of my people, so he had to show up some time. In the meantime, I wandered the village and tested my abilities as a spirit while watching over the villagers.

I soon learned that if I concentrated and focused my energy, I could dissolve myself and reappear in another location. But I didn't do this often, because it kind of made me feel sick if I did it too much.

I didn't attempt to walk through walls a whole lot, because the idea of walking straight into a solid surface was a little scary to me. Besides, I'd heard lots of stories and myths that said ghosts couldn't walk through the walls of a person's house, because of something called threshold magic. Whenever a person lived somewhere and made it their home, their energy would begin to seep into the house over time. That energy tended to keep out unwanted or unnatural energies like a ghost. The only way for a spirit to enter a home without damaging itself was if it was invited inside.

I found out the hard way that the sun isn't very nice to spirits. The first day I got back, I couldn't stay outside much longer than an hour before the sun would painfully singe my ghost skin, and something like steam would start to rise. I figured that was a bad sign and rushed to find a safe place to hunker down for the day.

I could bypass the threshold magic on my own house, so when my dad opened the door to go outside, I rushed past him and into the house. I think he felt the proverbial cold breeze when I did, because he paused for a moment and shivered before closing the door behind him.

Light still shone through the windows, so I ran upstairs to my room. Nothing had changed up there. My desk was still covered with a messy layer of drawings and diagrams, and my bed was still unmade from the last morning I was alive. My spare prosthetic leg was propped against the wall next to the bed, and there was also a spare tailfin for Toothless. There had also been a tailfin that I'd made at Snoggletog four years ago, the one that would allow Toothless to fly on his own. But Astro had come and gotten it last night. I knew Toothless would probably give Astro a hard time when he tried to put it on, but there was nothing I could do about that.

The windows were slightly open up here, but the sunlight wasn't painful. This was my space, and I was safe in it. If I had a grave dug in the ground, I would be safe there, too. But I didn't, and that was fine with me. I didn't want to have to dive into a hole every day.

I laid down on my unmade bed, but the blankets didn't give way or wrinkle under my body. It was still comfortable, though. I wasn't at all tired, but I closed my eyes anyway. Sleeping would be better than hanging around up here doing nothing all day.

As soon as the sun had set completely, my eyes snapped open. I rose and stretched, even though I had no need to do so. I made my way downstairs, but stopped when I reached the bottom.

My dad had just entered the house. He lean his back against the door and breathed rather hard while he fought a wave of tears that threatened to come pouring out. My heart ached for him and I wished with that I could talk to him, tell him it was going to be okay.

I thought back to when I spoke to Astro and Toothless. They had heard me. I wondered if I could make my dad hear me now.

"Dad," I said. He didn't react. He simply took a deep breath and began moving about the kitchen as he prepared himself supper.

"Dad!" I said it louder this time. "Come on, you have to hear me!" How had I made Astro and Toothless hear me last time? Maybe I needed to concentrate.

I focused my energy again and looked hard at Stoick. "\_Dad.\_" This time, I tried to put power in my words.

It finally worked. Stoick's head snapped up and he whirled around to face the room.

I bit my lip. What should I say next?

Stoick looked around for a moment, and then sighed with frustration. He was convincing himself that he was hearing things.

I took a deep breath. "\_Everything is going to be okay.\_"

He whirled around again, looking wildly around the house. "Hicca?" he asked desperately. "Is that you? Are you there?"

I felt a wave of elation and my concentration shattered. "Yes!" I shouted. "Yes, I'm here!"

But I realized that he hadn't heard me this time. I tried concentrating again, and putting power back into my words, but I just couldn't do it anymore. "Dammit!" I muttered. "Dammit, dammit, dammit!"

My dad continued to listen painfully for the next ten minutes, but I couldn't make him hear anything else. So, reluctantly, I drifted through the door and into the night.

I vanished and reappeared on the roof of my house, where I could see the entire village. Most people had gone to bed, but I could see the teens sneaking out of their bedroom windows and heading down to the arena with their dragons.

Toothless appeared to have not left Astro's side since my death. I could tell that Stormfly was a bit annoyed by this, but she kept those feelings to herself because she was going through the same thing they were.

I followed the group down to the arena, where they all sat in a circle. None of them said anything. They were just there to support each other.

But after a while, Fishlegs spoke up. "How are we going to continue dragon training without Hicca? She was the leader. She knew everything."

"We . . . we'll look through her notes on her desk," Astro said without looking up at him. "She probably kept a journal of all her findings." I did. The journal was probably buried under all my stuff, though. They'd have to do some digging.

"I'm not sure how comfortable I'd feel about rummaging through her things just yet," Snotlout said. "Maybe we should just all take a few weeks off from dragon training."

"No, don't do that!" I protested out loud.

"No, let's not do that," Astro said. I couldn't help but smile at that. "She wouldn't want us to halt dragon training. She'd want us to keep working, and start training the kids old enough to ride."

"There you go!" I said, giving the air a slight punch. "Get those kids on a dragon!"

"Hey, guys," Tuffnut said, "Sorry to interrupt your plans for dragon training, but that weird guy that killed Hicca has been standing above the arena for the past five minutes and he's creeping me out. Don't you think we should do something about that?"

## 6. Chapter 6

Astro and the others sprang to their feet and whirled around to look up at the demon standing in the viewing area above the arena. He was stock-still once again, and I guess he'd decided to be more stealthy this time because he wasn't radiating all that bad energy he had before.

"Tuffnut!" Astro screamed as he turned and kicked the guy in the balls. "\_Why didn't you say something the minute you saw him?!\_"

Tuffnut had fallen to the ground and curled into the fetal position. "Sorry!" he wheezed. "I was just letting you guys talk!"

"You \_fucking idiot!\_" Astro kicked him again in the gut before drawing his battleaxe and facing Bob.

"I am going to kill you," he said. "I am going to kill you for what you did to my girlfriend!"

For a moment, my heart swelled as he said that. "Aw, that's so sweet! You would literally kill for me!" And then Bob vaulted over the railing and dropped down into the arena.

I wiped the smile off my face. "Right," I said as I drew my sword. "We have some unfinished business." I engaged the blue-flaming blade and charged the demon.

Bob turned to look at me, and I swear for a moment he seemed surprised. Then he raised his own black weapon and we began to duel.

I felt the demon turn up his black aura once again. It pulsed, filling the arena, strong but invisible. But Odin had been true to his word—"I felt the aura, but it didn't affect me at all.

"That won't work on me now, bitch." I spun and slashed my sword across his chest. This time, the blade cut into his armor and a black liquid began to seep out. Bob screeched and redoubled his attack.

I backed up some before turning and running straight up the wall, flipping off and landing behind him. I slashed at the back of his knees this time, and he stumbled. Turns out that, without his aura weakening his prey, he wasn't very good.

"Wow, you are a lousy fighter," I told him out loud. Maybe I shouldn't have done that, because he growled and began attacking with even more vigor.

As we continued to fight, I managed to glance towards the group out of the corner of my eye. All of them, even the dragons, had sunk to the ground under the power of the black aura. They were pale and sweating, but all of them had their eyes locked on the battle before them. I wondered if they could see me, or if they only saw Bob fighting open air and wounds appearing on his body.

Quickly, I pushed those thoughts out of my mind so that I could concentrate on killing this son of a bitch.

We continued to move about the arena, and I whirled around him, trying to keep him dizzy and confused. I managed to stab him in the hip and get a gash above his eye, but he got me some too.

At one point he cut me pretty bad on my shoulder. It hurt like a bitch and impeded my movements slightly. I tried to flip over him in order to keep him confused. I succeeded and got on the other side of him—but I was a bit slow, and I felt his sword bite into my back, between my shoulder blades. I gritted my teeth when I landed, a jolt traveling through my back that didn't help my pain much. I whirled around and kept him busy for another few minutes, but he got a couple more hits around my arms and legs.

Finally, I decided that I'd had enough. I needed to get rid of him before me or my friends got hurt anymore. So, unleashing all of the energy that I had left, I leapt into the air. With a raw-throated cry, I brought my sword down as hard as I could, and got him straight through the middle of his stomach.

Screeching like a banshee, Bob dissolved into black mist and vanished.

Breathing hard, I stood and turned to look at my friends.

Astro had his eyes locked on Hicca—if that even was Hicca. Her dark, dark hair whipped around her as the energy gathered around her continued to swirl violently. Her skin was very pale except the few places that the Thing had hit her—there, her ghostly skin split open like cracks in wood, and a soft white light shone through the cracks. Her eyes were narrowed in a fierce gaze, the heat of battle still burning within them. They were supposed to be green, but now they glowed—literally—glowed—a bright blue light. She clutched her sword tightly in her hand, and the blue-white flames that flickered around it matched her glowing eyes.

None of the teens, or the dragons, had seen Hicca until she charged the Thing. She looked so angry as she fought with it, and if looks could kill, the Thing would have been dead long ago.

Astro had been too stunned to do anything when he first saw her, and once he and the others began to be affected by that sickening aura, there wasn't anything he could do, except watch.

All of the noise had attracted the villagers. They were annoyed and were grumbling when they showed up—until they saw the two

supernatural \_beings\_ locked in combat.

I froze when I saw the entire village staring back at me. Every single one of them looked at me with a mixture of wonder, amazement, and horror.

\_Oh, shit,\_ I thought. What the Hel do I do now?

"What's going on here?" a loud, gruff voice demanded. The villagers quickly moved out of Stoick's way as he pushed his way to the front on the crowd. "What's all this gods-awful raâ€"" he froze in his tracks and his voice caught when he saw me. He blanched and blinked hard. "H-hicca?" he stammered.

I didn't stick around. I simply vanished and reappeared in my room, even though it was still dark out. Groaning in pain, I lowered myself onto my bed and closed my eyes, letting the energy around me slowly dissipate.

My excuse for vanishing was that I was wounded and needed to heal. And that was trueâ€"it wasn't like I could bandage myself up. I wasn't bleeding . . . but I could feel the energy inside me trying to leak out through the wounds in my ghost skin. That energy I couldn't be without. It was what kept me aliveâ€"or whatever I was.

It kept me from simply winking out of existence. There. That's a better way of saying it.

I needed to restâ€"really Rest. The kind of Rest Odin had told me to get.

But part of the real reason I left was because I panicked. What was I supposed to tell them? Hey, guys, I died but Odin sent me back as a ghost and now my job is to kill a demon! So what's new with you?

I sighed. I knew Bob wasn't actually dead. He had just left so that he could heal, too. He would be back.

And eventually, I would have to face my people. I would have to tell them everything, and I didn't want to. I didn't want to tell them that a demon was out to destroy everyone.

I sighed again as I began to drift off to sleep. "Being dead sucks ass."

\*\*So, how am I doing so far? I think I'm pretty satisfied with my work, but what do you think?\*\*

## 7. Chapter 7

\*\*Hey guys! Sorry I haven't posted in so long. I tend to do my best writing really late at night, and I've been known to stay up until three or four in the morning. But since school is back in session, I haven't been able to do that except on Fridays and weekends. So you might only be hearing from me about once or twice a week from now on.\*\*

\*\*But don't worry, I'll see if I can make some chapters longer and try to refrain from doing cliffhangers.\*\*

As soon as Hicca disappeared, chaos erupted.

Some people began screaming, some began crying. Some ran home and locked themselves inside. Toothless pounced onto the spot where Hicca had stood, and began scratching uselessly at the stone floor. The other dragons ran around the arena, sniffing for any sign of her.

Astro and the teens simply stood in the middle of the arena, in a state catatonic shock. Stoick wasn't much of an exception. His mouth hung open, his face white. Several villagers turned to him, demanding to know what was going on and what they were supposed to do now.

Luckily, Gobber rushed forward and began shooing people away. "Alright, everyone go home, lock your doors, stay there," he continued to push and shove people as necessary until the angry crowd finally began to disperse. Once everyone was out of earshot, he turned to Stoick. "Alright, what's going on?"

"I-I don't know," the big man stammered. "Was that really my d-daughter?"

There was a huge lump in Astro's throat, and he found it difficult to speak. He tried to swallow past it, but to no avail. But, thankfully, Snotlout stepped forward. "I . . . I think so, sir."

"But how is that possible?" Gobber asked. "Hicca's . . . you know . . ."

"Dead," Tuffnut said helpfully. Astro gave him a death glare that made him visibly shrivel on the spot.

"What if she's come back?" Fishlegs asked timidly. "What if she's come back to protect us? You saw her kill the demon guy."

Nobody said anything. Astro thought back to when he and Toothless had heard Hicca's voiceâ€" '\_It was not your fault.\_'

"What if Fishlegs is right?" he said, very quietly. Everyone looked at him. "I mean . . . me and Toothless heard her voice. At the funeral." They continued to stare at him. "At least I think we did," he revised quickly.

Ruffnut's eyes were wide. "Ho-ly crap!"

"No!"

They all looked up at Stoick. His expression had hardened. "That . . . that \_thing\_ couldn't have been Hicca. She would have gone to Valhalla. She is in Valhalla. I don't care what any of you saw." He paused and swallowed. "My daughter is dead," he said more quietly, "and she will stay that way."

"But you saw her too, Stoick." Gobber put his hand on the man's shoulder. "You can't go into denial about this."

But Stoick shook his hand off violently. "Hicca is dead." He glared down at all of them. "You understand me? Dead. And she's not coming

back."

With that, he spun of his heel and half-ran back to his house.

Astro spent the entire next morning flying with Stormfly. And not a peaceful flight, either. They flew straight up as far as they could go, before plummeting back towards the ocean. They flew through the sea stacks, doing hard turns and risking a crash head-first into the sides. But they weren't nearly as good as Hicca and Toothless.

As soon as any thought of Hicca popped up in his mind, he quickly shoved it back out and pushed Stormfly to go faster. But, after a while, he realized her sides were heaving beneath him, and he knew he'd better stop before he ended up injuring her.

He landed back on Berk and removed her saddle, so that her scales could breathe. He gave her a big pile of chicken—"her favorite"—and rubbed the side of her neck while she ate, as a way of apologizing for pushing her so hard.

When she was done eating, Stormfly headed into the bunker inside the arena for a nap. It was the middle of winter, so she was eager to curl up some place warm.

Today was the first day of the week of Snoggletog. Vikings strode briskly around the village, putting up decorations and building the tree in the middle of the village.

Of course, not much got done because people were still buzzing about the events of last night.

As soon as they saw Astro, several kids ran up and began bombarding him with questions about Hicca and the demon. None of them had been able to see anything. What happened, exactly? Was there really a demon? What did it look like? Was Hicca a ghost? Was she creepy? What did she look like?

Astro tried not to get angry with them. They were kids. They were going to be curious. But he didn't answer any of their questions—instead he urged them to go help their parents and see what work they could do around the village. They all protested and grumbled unhappily, but they moved on.

Astro knew he should help out, but instead he walked off into the woods until he couldn't see the village anymore, and sat down on a log. He lowered his head into his hands and allowed a few tears to fall. This whole issue with Hicca was almost too much to bear. She was supposed to be dead. He had been on his way to making peace with her death, and then she shows up in the arena, a freaking ghost, and kills a demon.

He could completely understand why Stoick had nearly shut down last night. He hadn't left his house much this morning, and whenever he did, everyone avoided him at all costs.

A branch snapped behind him, and Astro hastily wiped his eyes and turned.

Toothless had followed Astro into the woods. The dragon came to sit beside Astro and stuck his head under Astro's hand, trying to get a

head rub. Astro scratched him behind the ears, looking sadly down at Toothless. He had refused to let anyone fly him since Hicca's death. Astro had managed to get the tailfin on him that would allow him to fly on his own, but even then Toothless refused to fly unless he absolutely had to. He would only walk around the island, and sometimes climb up on top of the chief's house and perch on the roof. The dragon would sit there for hours, staring down at the front door, as if he was still waiting for Hicca to walk outside.

"What are we gonna do, Toothless?" Astro asked. "Something is going on with Hicca, and I have to know what. If she's . . . I don't know . . . stuck . . . what if she's, sort of, trapped in between the living world and Valhalla?" As soon as he said it, Astro shook his head. "No. That just sounds too ridiculous."

Toothless crooned and laid his head across Astro's lap. Astro sighed, and lowered his head so that it rested on Toothless's back.

The two sat with each other like that until they heard the screams.

\*\*I said I would \*\*\_\*\*try\*\*\_\*\* to refrain from doing cliffhangers. I didn't say I would actually stop doing them altogether. Ciao for now! :P\*\*

## 8. Chapter 8

People were screaming. My eyes flew open.

I was still lying in bed, but I felt a lot better. The cracks in my skin had sealed, and I felt much more energized.

I looked out the window. The sun was still up. It would be a bad idea to go running out into it. But people kept screaming, and I knew exactly why. I couldn't just sit here and do nothing.

I jumped up and leapt straight through the wall.

The prickly feeling of passing straight through solid wood, combined with sudden exposure to the harsh sun, was very painful. "Glaaaaagh!" Now I guess I had some new insight as to why some ghosts were always moaning or wailing when they came popping out of somebody's wall or floorâ€"it \_hurts.\_

I gritted my teeth as I flew through the air and did my best to block the pain. I hit the ground running, which I thought was pretty cool, considering I just jumped from the second story.

Bob the Ass was standing in the middle of the village square, in front of the half-built Snoggletog tree. He had his sword out and was swinging it at any of the bravest warriors who dared to come close. I guess he hadn't fully healed yet, because I didn't feel his black aura at all, except for a few feeble wisps here and there.

It was mostly the kids who were completely freaking out. Their mothers grabbed them and dragged them inside the house, locking their doors and shutting all the windows. The men all had their weapons out, and began to surround Bob.

My father burst out of the forge, Gobber right behind him. Both had battleaxes at hand as they shoved their way to the front of the crowd. Astro and Toothless emerged suddenly from the woods. The other teens and dragons joined them as they, too, pushed and shoved their way forward until they stood before Bob.

The demon turned and jumped higher than would be possible for a normal human being, and stood on top of the half-built tree.

And he spoke.

His voice was what I imagined a snake would sound like—"a snake that was gargling red-hot iron nails.

"Where isssss sssshe?"

Everyone completely froze.

Bob looked down at my father. "Where isssss your bitccch daughter?"

My dad's face turned red and he began to tremble with pure rage. Gobber put his hand on his arm. "Careful, Stoick. Don't go getting yourself killed."

"I know you are hiding her," Bob said. "Give her to me. Tell me. Where isssss sssshe?"

"She's right here!" I yelled as I drew my sword. I was about sick of this guy.

The villagers turned as one and stared at me in shock. I wondered, vaguely, what I must look like to them.

Bob began to laugh. "Ah, sssso ssshe \_isssss\_ here!"

"Should you really be laughing?" I asked. "As I recall, I kicked your ass the last time we met."

Bob growled, and I just smirked. "You wanna dance?" I brought my sword up and began to swing it in a downward slash. Right as it began to come down, I vanished and reappeared right behind him.

My sword, already in motion, slashed deep into his back, from the left shoulder and all the way down to his right hip.

Bob had no time to react. He simply screeched in pain and toppled forward, off of the tree. I leapt down after him, and tried to land on his back. But he was quicker than I thought, and he rolled out of the way. He managed to stand, but I could see black ichor pouring down his back and dripping on the ground.

I ran forward, intending to run him through a second time, but Bob had been able to keep a hold on his sword. He brought it up and deflected my attack. I feinted, then stabbed his hip, but he still managed to spin on one foot and kick me in the chest. I flew backwards a good eight feet, and crashed into the Snoggletog tree. It hurt, but I wasn't exactly solid. I sank a few inches into the wood, and that helped to lessen the impact.

Growling, I pushed myself back up and charged him again. This time I deflected his blade off to the side and let my reflexes take over. I slashed and jabbed, letting my anger fuel my energy and strength. How dare he come to my village? How dare he threaten my people? I began to push him back. The villagers moved out of the way, not wanting to get in the middle of this fight.

How dare he rip my life apart? How dare he try to harm my friends and family?\_ The outside world faded as only one thought filled my mind: \_Kill him.\_

Bob could barely defend himself. He was beginning to tire and panic as I backed him up against the outside wall of the forge.

With one final stroke, I sent his blade spinning out of his hand and had my sword point an inch away from his throat, the blue-white flames nearly licking his chin.

"You cannot kill me!" he yelled. "I am immortal! I am superior to you, foolish girl!"

"Fuck off, asshole!" I spun my sword and stabbed him in the heart. Then I yanked the blade back out and beheaded him. Empty black armor collapsed, as an empty helmet rolled across the ground. Black smoke rose from both.

The demon was dead.

## 9. Chapter 9

I stood over the empty armor for a moment, breathing hard. I turned when I heard footsteps behind me.

My father stood a couple of feet away from me. I could see the pain in his eyes as he stared. "Hicca," he whispered.

I opened my mouth to speak, but then I suddenly remembered that it was daytime. I looked down at my arms. The sun was beginning to flat-out burn my ghost skinâ€"it was slowly turning from pale white to black, and that steam-like stuff was pouring from my skin more profusely. I needed to get out of the sun.

I looked back up at my dad. "My room," I said. "Now." And then I vanished back to the house.

I was sitting on my bed when the door opened slowly. Stoick entered cautiously, closing the door behind him.

My dad looked around in confusion, and glanced right through me. I realized he couldn't see me. How come everyone could see me earlier?

Then it clicked. No one had been able to see me until I had my sword drawn. Maybe that was part of the power it had nowâ€"it made me visible to the mortal world.

I considered moving to the far corner of the room before drawing my sword, in an effort to avoid making him shit himself, but I was too tired. So I remained where I was on the bed and drew my sword,

activating the blue-white flames.

Stoick gasped at my sudden appearance, eyes wide. I smiled sadly.  
"Hi, Dad."

He didn't say anything for a moment. Then he asked, "What are you?"

I lowered my sword so that the point rested on the floor. The flames didn't even leave any scorch marks, so I let it stay there. I looked down at my lap. "A ghost. A spirit. Whatever you want to call it." I looked back up at him. "But I am Hicca."

"No," he said, quietly. "My daughter is dead." His voice hardened.  
"You are not my Hicca."

I had suspected my dad wouldn't believe me at first. I had to prove to him, somehow, that it really was me.

"I know she's dead," I said quietly. "I am her."

"The kids told me about the man who seemed to be a demon," he said, voice shaking with anger. "How do I know you are not the demon in a disguise?"

"Because I killed that demon, Dad. He was one of Loki's demons."

"Loki's demons?" Stoick demanded. "They have been imprisoned for over three hundred years!"

"And one of them escaped." I watched my dad cock his head, confused. His eyes were threatening to fill with tears, but he held them back. I softened my expression. "Dad . . . just let me explain what happened to me."

Stoick continued to glare daggers at me.

"Please." I implored him with my eyes. "Please just listen to me."

\* \* \*

><p>When she said that, Stoick's memory flashed back four years.  
<em>"For once in your life, will you please just listen to  
me!"<em>

The big man backed up until his back hit the wall. "Fine," he whispered. "Fine. I'll listen."

\* \* \*

><p>I told him everything.<p>

I described what happened as I died, and how I got to Valhalla. I told him about my conversation with Odin, what he told me about Loki and his demons. I told him all about how the demon would have gone after my friends, and from there, the rest of the village. I described how Odin changed my sword, so that I could kill the demon and protect my people. I explained what the god had said about being able to restore life to me if I succeeded, and how he sent me back to

Berk. When I finished, I took a deep breath and watched my dad.

He'd had his head bowed the whole time, staring down at his feet. For a moment, he stayed that way. Then, slowly, he raised his head to look at me. He had begun to weep again. "So . . . so it really is . . . you?"

I nodded, tears filling my own eyes. "Yes. It's me."

Stoick stood and approached me, reaching out as if to touch me.

But his hand passed right through my arm. He quickly yanked his hand back and began to weep even harder. "I wish I could hug you."

"Me too." I didn't bother to try and wipe away my tears. I took a deep breath and struggled to swallow past the hard lump in my throat. "So . . ." I began, "So where's Toothless?"

As if on cue, something hit the roof hard, and dust rained down from the rafters. The house shook again as the object began pounding repeatedly on the roof.

My dad let out a weak laugh. "There he is."

"Do you think you should let him in?"

He thought for a minute, then shook his head. "I don't think so. There's no telling how he will react to seeing you . . . seeing you like . . ."

I nodded. "What about Astro, and the others?"

"They all wanted in, but . . . I didn't let them." He looked guilty. "I just, I don't know . . ."

"It's fine," I assured him. "I understand."

We sat in awkward silence. I mean, come on, what exactly were we supposed to talk about? He just found out that I was dead but not in Valhalla, but I could still be killed again. Wait, so did that mean I wasn't really dead? Was I actually, like, half-alive or something? Or maybe I was undead.

What?

I just confused myself. Fuck. "This situation is diabolical," I muttered.

"Sorry?" Stoick said.

I snapped back to myself and just shook my head. "Nothing. I was just wondering about what's going to happen, now that I've killed the demon."

"Odin is supposed to bring you back." A faint hope began to glow in his eyes.

"Yeah, but he didn't exactly say when, and he hasn't shown up yet."

"Why don't you pray?"

Oh. Why didn't I think of that? I mentally slapped myself and bowed my head. Odin, my Lord, I prayed silently, I have completed my task. The demon is no more.

For a moment, nothing happened.

And then a tremendous sense of peace began to overcome me—it wasn't like when I was dying, when I simply felt tired. This time, I actually felt real peace. My work was done.

I looked up at my father, as I felt myself begin to dissolve. His eyes widened and he stepped towards me. "Hicca!"

I smiled softly. "I'll see you later, Daddy." The world faded as I drifted in a peaceful, warm darkness. I heard a deep, familiar voice in my head. Well done, child. The balance has been corrected. You are going home.

I continued to smile. I'm going home.

## 10. Chapter 10

When Hicca dissolved, Stoick was gripped with panic. How was he supposed to know, for sure, that she would come back? What if he never saw her again?

He ran downstairs and burst outside, as if maybe he would see her standing in the crowd gathered at his door. People shouted in surprise at his sudden appearance and backed up—except for Gobber, Toothless, and the teens.

Stoick must have looked pretty panicked, because Gobber stood in front of him and shook his shoulders. "Stoick! What's happened?"

It took a little while, but they got Stoick calm enough to talk to them. He told them everything Hicca had told him. Of course, there were skeptics in the crowd. They were convinced Stoick had spoken to a demon and that they were all doomed.

On the other hand, there were several others that were overjoyed to hear that Hicca could be coming back. Then a whole argument broke out between the pessimists and the optimists and there was almost a full-on brawl.

"ENOUGH!" Stoick roared. Everyone froze and stared at him. "I am completely convinced that that was my daughter in there, and I want everyone to be on the lookout for her if she comes back. I don't think Odin would have lied to her about bringing her back, so I want search parties out there, constantly. If anyone finds her, you come straight to me!"

There were a few complaints, but eventually search parties were divided up and schedules were arranged. Toothless, Astro, and Stoick worked together to restore order to the village—or at least as much order as was possible.

Astro was torn between anguish and elation. He wasn't entirely sure

whether he believed Hicca was coming back, and if she did, he didn't know what he would do or say to her. Toothless, on the other hand, wouldn't calm down. He still refused to fly, but he bounded around the village, occasionally sniffing the ground for Hicca and pouncing on random people in his excitement. Normally, there would be yells of irritation and annoyance at this behavior, but for now, the villagers let him be.

\* \* \*

><p>Two days later, Stoick sat at his kitchen table with his head in his hands. There was still no sign of Hicca. Fear gnawed constantly at his heart. What if she was truly dead this time? Why would she be told she was coming back, and then never show up? Stoick was slowly beginning to accept that they would never find her.</p>

Suddenly, he heard someone pounding on the door. "Cheif!" Looking up, Stoick hurried to open the door.

A member of one of the nighttime search parties, a young man, was standing there, hunched over, hands on his knees as he gasped for air. Stoick guessed that he'd run all the way here. "What is it, son?"

"Sir . . . found her . . . woods . . . just lying there . . ."

Stoick's heart leapt into his throat. "Where?" he demanded severely, grabbing the young man's shoulders. He pointed wordlessly towards the woods, where a crowd had started to gather.

Stoick half-shoved him out of the way and ran like he'd never run before.

The crowd was standing at the edge of the woods, a few holding torches so that they could see in the dark of night. They were murmuring amongst themselves, unsure of what to do. "Is she really in there?" "I'm not sure I really want to go walking in and see." "What if it's not really her?" "Gods, what will the chief do?"

Stoick tore past them and into the trees. He could barely see anything outside the circle of torchlight, but he continued to plod through the blanket of snow that covered the ground. Once he was about fifty feet into the woods, Stoick saw a black mass in front of him. Toothless. The dragon was standing over something, cooing and licking it.

Hicca.

Stoick approached slowly, staring at his daughter. Her dark hair was splayed out around her head, a stark contrast against the white snow. Her face was pale. She didn't appear to be breathing.

Stoick dropped down beside her and scooped her up into his arms. She felt so small and frail, and her skin was cold, so cold. He placed a massive hand on her icy cheek. "Hicca," he whispered. "Hicca, can you hear me?"

Her fingers twitched.

Stoick breath quickened. Toothless lowered his head blew a puff of hot air into her face.

Hicca's lips parted, and her eyelids moved. "Hicca?" he said again.

"Daddy . . ." she moaned.

Stoick threw his head back and laughed. It probably sounded a little crazy, but he didn't care. His little girl was alive.

When he looked back down at her, Hicca was looking up at him. Her eyes, which were back to their normal, beautiful forest green, were distant. She blinked slowly, as if she was struggling to focus.

"Daddy," she rasped again, her quiet voice cracking.

"Shhh." Stoick clutched her small body closer to his chest. "I've got you," he whispered into her ear. "It's okay. I've got you." Toothless licked her hand, which was dangling limply from his arms. Stoick chuckled. "Toothless has you too."

\* \* \*

><p>I closed my eyes as my dad hugged me to his chest. His beard tickled my cheek as he whispered in my ear. I couldn't really understand what he was saying, but it made me feel good. Something warm and slimy ran over my hand. That would be Toothless's tongue. I would have giggled if I had the strength.</p>

I felt my dad lift me into the air as he stood, and I shivered in the cold air. He rubbed my arm and said something else into my ear before he started walking.

All around me, I could hear shouts and murmurs of surprise from the other villagers. I didn't know what they were excited about, and I was too tired to care. In time, the voices quieted and the air turned from frigid and to toasty and warm. I assumed we'd entered the house.

I was carried upstairs and placed on my bed, where my dad removed my leather armor and my prosthetic, so that I wore just my green tunic. I felt him cover me with several blankets, and warmth began to creep back into my limbs.

Toothless laid his head down across my torso and helped to warm me with his body heat. My dad sat next to the bed, holding my hand. I forced my eyes open and slowly turned my head to look at him. Everything was blurry, but I could tell he smiled at me. He brushed my hair out of my face and laid his hand on the top of my head.

The air began to sting my eyes, and I had to close them again. I let myself begin to drift off to sleep, a small smile on my face. I was happy.

I was finally home.

#### 11. Author's Note: Sequel

\*\*I hope you guys enjoyed this fanfic! I had a ton of fun writing it,

and I think it did pretty well, considering this was my first fanfic.  
\*\*

\*\*A few of you have asked about a sequel, and I have been toying with a few ideas in my head. The one I think I will settle on will probably be called "The Nightmare's Grip." I won't spoil anything! Just keep an eye out this week, I'm already working on chapter one!\*\*

End  
file.